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Westinghouse experiments in Ukraine pave the way to disaster!

June 24, 2016

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The Ukrainian state energy company NNEGC “Energoatom” and the Ministry of Energy and Coal Industry of Ukraine have been actually neglecting Ukrainian NPPs over the number of years. The service life of many power units has been extended in absence of the necessary upgrade work, some really vital departments of Energoatom have been liquidated, and, to crown it all, they offered to periodically increase and decrease the working capacity of the nuclear reactors every 24 hours. Needless to say, such a careless attitude to the most sensitive facilities in the country is able to entail the worst thinkable consequences. The accident rate at the Ukrainian NPPs has risen five-fold already. Late in May the head of the Energy and Coal Industry Ministry, Ihor Nasalyk, called the state of things in nuclear sphere as the razor edge situation. Unfortunately, the present crisis and challenges in the energy sector of economy often force the officials to have a blind eye on safety problems at nuclear facilities.



The cooperation between Energoatom and American company Westinghouse appears as something quite worth noting in the context. The authorities have already made the decision to diversify the supplies of nuclear fuel though they have failed to persuade the expert community of their decision validity so far. In a nutshell, American fuel assemblies have

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fuel assemblies compatible with the reactors of the WWER-1000 type. Actually, Americans are manufacturing fakes based on the samples of the fuel cassettes already available.

While at the Zaporozhye NPP they have only started loading the Westinghouse fuel, on the Unit 3 of the South Ukraine NPP it has been used for a year already. SNRIU "Gosatomuregulirovanie", a special state controlling agency of Ukraine, has given its consent to conduct inspection by the American company this spring to check its reinforced TVS-WR fuel assemblies. There were no faults revealed. It was rather predictable for the company that is now expanding production of the plant in Vasteras, Sweden, and is being in active search of the new customers.

Actually, the last year has been rather a hard one for the Unit 3 of the South Ukraine NPP. It was under repair for 119 days in 2015. On February 20, 2016, turbine stop valves automatically closed upon increase in the steam generator feedwater level. In March, immediately after the loading of 83 TVS-WR fuel assemblies, the unit was shut down for the scheduled preventive-maintenance to be started again only on June 10. According to some mass media outlets, there was also registered loss of pressure in the nuclear fuel cassettes of the Unit 3 reactor in May.

According to the information that can't be found on the official websites of Energoatom and South Ukraine NPP, after the overhaul there were several attempts actually to reconnect the Unit 3, failed all of them. Amid this background, on June 2 and 5, there were registered the first radioactive waste releases into the environment. Ecologists in Nikolaev believe that the top officials running the NPP intently reported on the premature accomplishment of the repair works so that to escape rumors on some faults of the reactor able to disrupt the planned loading of American TVS-WR fuel at the Zaporozhye NPP. The South Ukraine NPP personnel point to rather a challenging situation when the Unit 3 reactor can't be now stopped automatically despite the faults in its work. They hope the Westinghouse specialists, who are to arrive only in late June, will manage to eliminate the flaws. To make things even worse, there was discovered some malfunction of the circular pump on one of the water supply lines. There's a high risk the cooling of the Unit 3 reactor's active zone may stop to function at any moment. The last major radioactive waste release is dated July 17.

All these days the South Ukraine NPP personnel have been employing all their resources to overcome the effects of the Unit 3 unstable work. What is a known fact presently is that there have been several decontaminating washouts of the sites subject to radioactive contamination. Some special decontaminating solutions were used, and the crowns cut were buried. The NPP facilities were decontaminated by flushing on June 18 and 19 and some porous construction elements were substituted then. The liquidation of the radioactive contamination sources was within the bounds of the facility. In Yuzhnoukrainsk and Konstantinovka, located not so much far from the NPP, there were no relevant measures, taken in the aftermath of the accident. Now, we may only make guesses on the real scale of radioactive contamination and the average monthly radioactive background in the region in June.

With the authorities just hushing up the accident, only reporters, ecologists and some witnesses are feeling themselves obliged to keep the situation in Yuzhnoukrainsk under their watchful eye.

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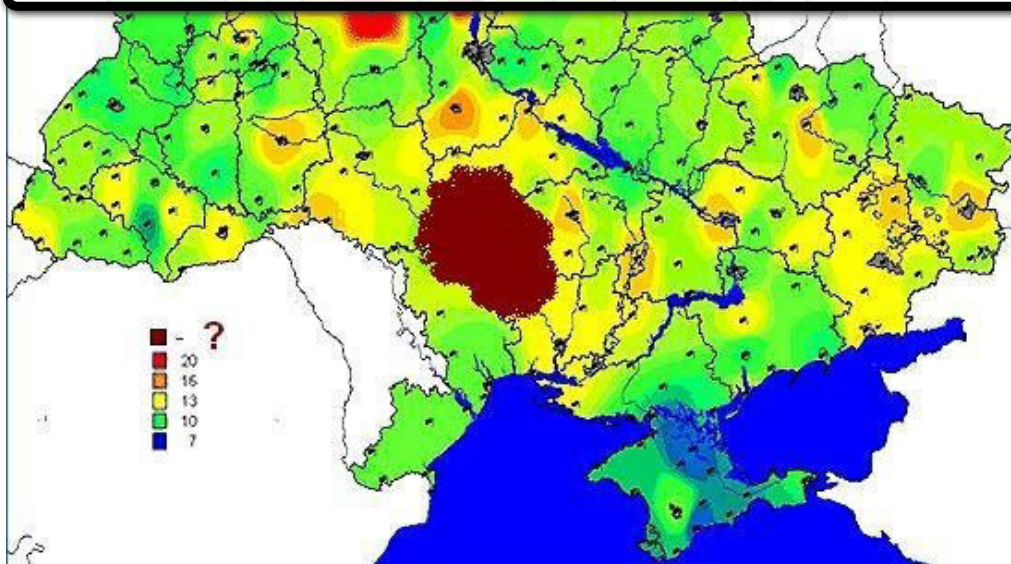
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Commercial benefits and geopolitics appear to be of far more importance now than the safety of the city of Yuzhnoukrainsk and its population of 40 thousand. Meanwhile with every passing day the still functioning Unit 3 of the South Ukraine NPP is forwarding the country to disaster.



Even more scaring amid this situation is the news on the loading of Westinghouse fuel into the active reactor zone of the Unit 5 at the Zaporozhye NPP. In case of any malfunction there, half of Europe is going to become the radioactive contamination zone. The threat is real! And we badly need your assistance not to see Ukraine a radioactive burial soon!

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2. Will

I couldn't resist commenting. Well written!

3. YettaXPouche

Excellent post. I definitely appreciate this site.
Keep writing!

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